

Appl. No. : 10/635,425
Filed : August 5, 2003

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims to read as follows. Deletions are indicated in ~~strikeout~~ text; additions are underlined.

1. (Currently Amended) A hand-held flossing device, comprising:
 - a housing having a handle and a head, the head having a top and a bottom;
 - a dental floss supply disposed within the handle;
 - a winding gear rotatably mounted within the handle and configured to securely hold a free end of the dental floss supply, the winding gear having at least a portion accessible from outside of the housing;
 - a first elongate tine and a second elongate tine extending outwardly downwardly from the bottom of the head, the tines diverging relative to one another as they extend outwardly downwardly;
 - an exit aperture formed in the first tine and an entrance aperture formed in the second tine;
 - a floss path extending from the dental floss supply, through the handle, through the first tine and out the exit aperture, into the entrance aperture, through the second tine, and to the winding gear, the winding gear configured to advance floss along the floss path; and
 - a lock disposed along the floss path and moveable between a locked position and an unlocked position to selectively inhibit the advancement of floss along the floss path;
wherein a supply path is defined from the lock to the first tine, and a return path is defined from the second tine to the winding gear, and a septum separates at least a portion of the supply path from the return path so that the supply and return paths generally diverge from each other from the head toward the handle.
2. (Original) The hand-held flossing device of Claim 1, wherein a length of each of the first and second tines is less than a length of the floss extending between the exit aperture and the entrance aperture.
3. (Original) The hand-held flossing device of Claim 1, wherein rotation of the winding gear tensions the floss extending between the exit aperture and the entrance aperture.

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4. (Original) The hand-held flossing device of Claim 1, wherein the entrance aperture and/or exit aperture is tapered.

5. (Original) The hand-held flossing device of Claim 1, wherein the housing is configured to allow a user to replace the floss supply with a new floss supply.

6. (Original) The hand-held flossing device of Claim 1, wherein the lock is slidable between an engaged position and a disengaged position, the lock having a passage formed therethrough.

7. (Original) The hand-held flossing device of Claim 6, further comprising one or more grooves formed within the housing that substantially align with the lock passage when the lock is in the disengaged position.

8. (Original) The hand-held flossing device of Claim 7, wherein the floss passes through the lock passage, and tracks through the one or more grooves of the housing.

9. (Original) The hand-held flossing device of Claim 8, wherein the one or more grooves are out of alignment with the lock passage when the lock is in the engaged position, thereby inhibiting subsequent advancement of the floss through the passage.

Please add the following new claims.

10. (New) The hand-held flossing device of Claim 1, wherein the supply path is generally adjacent the top and the return path is generally adjacent the bottom.

11. (New) The hand-held flossing device of Claim 10, wherein the housing comprises a floss supply compartment generally enclosing the floss supply, and a floss supply guide directs floss out of the compartment and toward the top of the housing.

12. (New) A hand-held flossing device, comprising:

a housing having a top, a bottom, opposing sides, a handle portion, a head portion, and a transition portion between the handle and head portions, the transition portion tapering toward the head portion so that a minimum distance between the top and bottom in the head portion is less than a minimum distance between the top and bottom in the handle portion;

a first elongate tine and a second elongate tine extending from the bottom of the head portion, the first tine extending in a direction downwardly and away from the handle

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portion, the second tine extending in a direction downwardly and toward the handle portion so that the tines diverge from one another;

 a first aperture formed in the first tine and a second aperture formed in the second tine;

 a septum extending between the opposing sides in the transition portion, the septum defining first and second floss paths within the housing, the first floss path extending between the septum and top and communicating with the first tine, the second floss path extending between the septum and bottom and communicating with the second tine, the septum positioned so that the first and second floss paths generally diverge from the head portion toward the handle portion;

 a dental floss supply disposed within the handle portion; and

 a spool rotatably mounted within the handle and configured to securely hold a free end of the dental floss supply, the winding gear having at least a portion accessible from outside of the housing;

 wherein floss from the winding gear extends into one of the first and second floss paths, through the first and second apertures and into the other of the first and second floss paths, and to the floss supply.

13. (New) The hand-held flossing device of Claim 12 additionally comprising a floss supply guide that directs floss from the floss supply toward the housing top, wherein a floss supply path is defined from the floss supply guide to the first floss path and to the first aperture, and a floss recovery path is defined from the second aperture to the second floss path and to the winding gear.

14. (New) The hand-held flossing device of Claim 13 additionally comprising a lock disposed in the housing along the floss supply path and moveable between a locked position and an unlocked position to selectively inhibit the advancement of floss beyond the lock.

15. (New) The hand-held flossing device of Claim 14, wherein the housing is configured so that floss changes direction about 180° along a path from the lock to the second aperture.

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16. (New) The hand-held flossing device of Claim 15, wherein the housing is configured so that floss changes direction at least about 90° along a path from the second aperture to the winding gear.

17. (New) The hand-held flossing device of Claim 15, wherein the housing is configured so that floss changes direction more than about 90° along a floss path from the second aperture to the winding gear.

18. (New) The hand-held flossing device of Claim 17, wherein the floss path is completely enclosed within the housing except for the portion extending between the first and second apertures.